

Illustrated Interviews.

LXIII. — M. VASILI VERESTCHAGIN.

By ARTHUR MEE.



VERESTCHAGIN and war are diametrical opposites — irreconcilable antagonisms. Nobody who knows him can think of M. Verestchagin as a warrior. Judging from his countenance, you might mistake him for a professor, deeply versed in science, or perhaps theology, and after five minutes' conversation with him you might be pardoned for supposing that he is the President of the Peace Society. Everything about him is anti-military — his pleasant face, his homely manner, his friendly disposition towards all men, his perfect frankness, his devotion to the most peaceful of all the arts. Yet but for war M. Verestchagin might have been an unknown painter in Moscow, painting the portraits of Russian noblemen, and painting them well, but he could hardly have made the reputation he now enjoys as the greatest military painter of the nineteenth century. Nobody will object to that designation more strongly than M. Verestchagin himself, but of that more anon.

The study of biography, in all countries and in all ages, suggests an interesting reflection. How many great careers might have been lost to the world, or have been diverted into utterly different channels, if children had always obeyed their parents in all things! Luther would never have been a preacher, Handel would never have been a composer, and Verestchagin would never have been a painter. Instead, he might have been a victorious general in the army

of the Czar. But young Verestchagin was something of a diplomatist even at fourteen, and he effected a compromise between his own inclinations and the desire of his parents by entering the naval school and studying painting at the same time. The rule that you cannot do two things at once and do both well did not hold good in his case, for he left the naval school as its head scholar, first among sixty boys, and he had

not long to wait for his silver medal at the Academy of Fine Arts. Had he remained in the school and become a naval marine officer, as his parents desired, his name would no doubt have shone brilliantly on the pages of Russian naval history, but that would have been poor compensation for the loss by the world of some of its greatest paintings.

The silver medal was a source of great encouragement to the young artist, who determined from that time to devote himself to the art he loved. His father was a rich landowner, who had never dreamed that his son would be a mere painter, and his mother thought him mad "to give up such

a grand career to paint pictures!" But the desire to become a great painter was too deep-rooted in the lad to be eradicated by scoffing, even when the scoffs came from his own father and mother, and Vasili Verestchagin worked with his pencil and brush for sixteen hours a day. He had begun his life-work, and a few years later, after travelling, pencil in hand, in the Caucasus, Verestchagin found himself in Paris.

The artist still delights to recall these early



M. VASILI VERESTCHAGIN (PRESENT DAY).
From a Photo. by E. Bieber, Hamburg.

days. "Who sent you to me?" asked Gérôme, when Verestchagin applied for admission to the Beaux Arts. "Your paintings," replied the applicant, and no more questions were asked. Verestchagin showed his pluck the first day by breaking through the "fagging" traditions of the school.

It was the joy of the students to humiliate a "new man," and Verestchagin was not at first exempted from the rule. But instead of submitting he played carelessly with a pocket revolver when the first degrading order was given, and the students ordered him about no more. Verestchagin returned home after three years in Paris, and it was then that he saw war for the first time. It was in 1867, when the Russians sent an army into Central Asia to punish the marauding Turcomans.

"I went with General Kauffmann, as an artist," M. Verestchagin told me, "but I was obliged to take part, and I tasted the horrors of war for the first time. It was at Samarcand, a town captured by our army, you remember, in 1868. I was one of five hundred imprisoned within the walls of the city, and outside was a wild army of twenty thousand barbarians. To surrender would have been to sign our own sentence of death, and we kept them out for eight days and nights. Then, at last, the fierce, unequal struggle came to an end. The savage horde, setting fire to the great gate, rushed into the town across the flames. I can never forget the ferocious heads of these savages,



M. VERESTCHAGIN (AGE 12 YEARS).
From a Photo.

the red light on the bayonets of our soldiers, and the monotonous orders of our officers for the firing of our only gun. How they yelled and fought amid the flames! But General Kauffmann fortunately came up in time, and the fortress was delivered."

In thus modestly telling the story of this gallant exploit, M. Verestchagin forgot to mention that he spent most of those eight days and nights on the battlemented walls, with a revolver in each hand, and that for his part in the defence of Samarcand he received the Cross of St. George, the highest military decoration Russia can bestow.

I asked M. Verestchagin what were his first impressions of war, and his answer

throws an unpleasant light on the matter-of-fact way in which the killing of men goes on.

"The business side of war is, from the soldier's point of view, not so horrible as you may imagine. The horror of it breaks upon you gradually. First one man falls wounded,

then another falls dead, and you have not time to reflect. I was horrified to see comrades fall about me, but no sickening feeling came over me as I struck the enemy, though I killed many men. You know what killing bears and tigers is like—war is just like that. It is for your country, and you think of that; and you remember that you will be rewarded for your valour. Certainly, there is excitement, but not more so, I think, than in common sport. I have never known a soldier who, after killing another

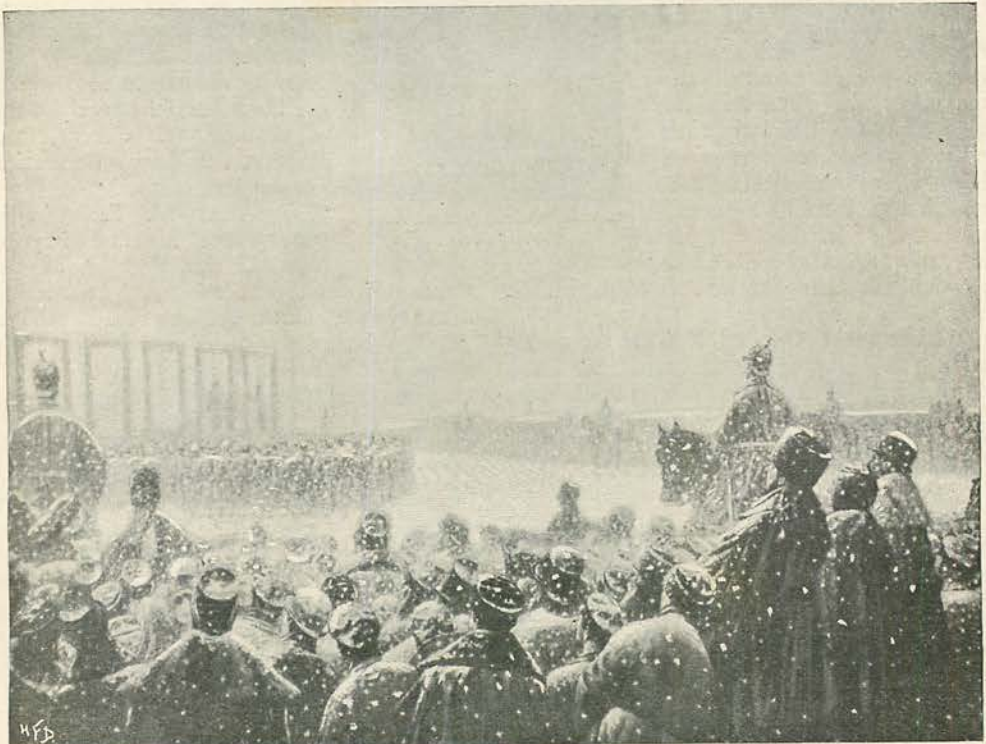


M. VERESTCHAGIN AS A NAVAL STUDENT.
From a Photo.

man, has asked himself, 'What have I done?' The average soldier, on the other hand, would certainly think himself more worthy of reward if he killed ten men than if he killed two."

Though most of us know M. Verestchagin as a painter of pitilessly-realistic war pictures, it is quite a mistake, as he was careful to point out to me, to imagine that he has painted nothing else but military scenes. His first great picture shown in London was "The Opium-Eaters," which was an instant success; and of the hundreds of pictures he

on the battlefield. That is why war attracts me, as it must always attract artists, and authors too. Every hour war brings something new, something never seen before, something outside the range of ordinary human life; it is the reversal of Christianity; and for the artist, the author, and the philosopher, it must always have a supreme interest. But what a foolish game it is! Here, men are being shot down like cattle; there, sisters of mercy are picking them up and trying to heal their wounds. A man no sooner falls than he is taken into the



From the Picture by]

THE EXECUTION OF THE NIHILISTS WHO MURDERED THE LATE CZAR.

[Verestchagin.

has painted, probably less than half have anything to do with battles. Some of his best work, indeed, are paintings of rivers, mountains, and other peaceful scenes, such as his pictures of India and the Holy Land. But it is by his military pictures, nevertheless, that M. Verestchagin has made his European reputation, though he observed, when I touched on the point:—

"I am not a military painter at all. I paint war scenes because they are very interesting. War is the loss of all human sense; under its influence men become animals entirely. The artist looks always for passion, and passion is seen at its height

hospital, where men with broken limbs lie in hundreds or thousands; and while gentle women are tenderly caring for them, assuaging their agony, and lessening, as much as they can, their almost unbearable pain, men are falling like rain not far away. What nonsense! How stupid to wound a man to heal his wound again! The savages are the only logical warriors I know. They kill their enemies and eat them."

There is no need to attempt here a critique of M. Verestchagin's work. His pictures are known wherever art and artists are, and where they are known they are admired. It may perhaps be doubted if any

other artist has achieved such distinction in so many paths. The pictures which have come from his studios during forty years of active work—they number hundreds—are as varied in scene and treatment as they are in size, but one thing may be said of them all—they come “fresh from Nature.” There is no theatrical veil over them. Whether his subject be one of peace or one of war—whether it be the beautiful, placid conception of the Holy Family; the woful, despairing retreat of the Grand Army from Moscow; the field of death; or the peoples, and scenes, and festivals of the Eastern world—the great fact which stands

hot storm of shot fell upon them. But—horror upon horror!—the torpedo *would not go off!* The shot had cut the fuse. Just then Verestchagin felt a sickening sensation, and putting his hand to the place where something had struck him, he found a hole big enough to admit three fingers. He was in danger three months, but he rose from his bed and went through the campaign, witnessing the rush on Constantinople which he has put so magnificently on canvas.

And Verestchagin is as original as he is human. For centuries no artist had penetrated the heart of Asia. The wild life of that vast continent was unknown in pictorial



From the Pictures by]



“ALL QUIET AT SHIPKA.”—THE FATE OF A SENTRY.



[Verestchagin.

out clearly in Verestchagin's pictures is their vivid, human reality. He is, above all, a great human painter. When, as a student in Paris, Gérôme sent him to the antique, Verestchagin would slip away to Nature. When set to work on Athenian marbles, his pencil would refuse to act, and he would turn to flesh and blood for his models as naturally as the river turns to the sea. When, in the Russo-Turkish War, he wanted to study the effect of a gunboat in the air, he begged to be allowed to accompany the sailors who were to sink a Turkish gunboat on the Danube. It was a perilous task, in which the men carried their lives in their hands, and the officer in command hesitated.

“Russia has hundreds of officers like me, but not two painters like you,” he said.

But Verestchagin insisted, and went. Quietly they stole up to the Turkish craft, but not too quietly for the eyes and ears of the Turkish sentries to discover them. As they thrust the torpedo under the bows, a

art. Verestchagin began his work there. He lifted the veil which no other hand had raised, and painted the faces, the landscapes, the remnants of a decaying civilization, which had never been painted before. How they laughed like children—these types of a passing world—when they saw themselves on canvas! How they cried, too, and ran away fear-stricken that the stranger had something to do with the world to come! India, also, with every element of the picturesque, with human types, and architecture and colour unmatched, perhaps, in the world, Verestchagin discovered for art. He saw the dependency at its best and at its worst, and his “pictorial poem” of Northern India ranks amongst the noblest of his works.

But his war pictures—what can compare with these? What, less than actual war, can fill us with such sickening horror? That pyramid of human skulls raised up in the desert dedicated to “all conquerors, past, present, and to come”! Those prisoners of



From the Picture by

"PRISONERS OF THE INDIAN MUTINY BLOWN FROM GUNS."

[Verestchagin.

the Indian Mutiny, their faces writhed with unutterable pain, blown by British soldiers from British guns! Those dying men who have spilt their blood for their country's weal, with their last glance to heaven darkened by hungry vultures hovering overhead, waiting for a meal! And what can surpass, in tragic despair, his picture of Napoleon in the peasant's hut?—"for a whole day he sits in a peasant's hut, thinking, thinking, but never speaking a word to the expectant marshals who await his orders." Verestchagin has painted Napoleon as the Emperor has never been painted before.

"I have painted him as a man," he told me. "He is Napoleon still, but he is also a man, not half God as he is generally represented to be. I have not painted him like a king in his carriage, wearing a smart uniform. I have seen the Emperor painted in a smart pelisse of silk and fur, with stylish openings, and depicted thus on his Russian campaign. But it is absurd: he would have been frozen to the lungs. The fact is that Napoleon wore a long, plain pelisse and a Samoyede hat, and he did not ride, but walked with his men because the army grumbled at the comfort of his carriage. There are fifteen pictures in the Napoleon series, which took me eight years to paint. I began them in Paris, but

could not get on with them there. I must have the Russian snows about me, the Russian winter. So I packed up my luggage and went home to Moscow, where, in my own house, which stands on a hill, I finished the work amid snows such as are never seen in England, but which bathe Moscow in a sheet of white to-day as they did in 1812."

"Your intimate knowledge of Russia, and especially of Moscow, must have been of great assistance to you in painting these pictures?"

"Quite so; and it may interest you to know that I spent a whole year in reading up the history of the time in Paris, and read every book on the subject that I could get hold of. I have taken no notice of the official history of the war. I know too much about official history to think it of much value. I know that if official history says 2,000 were killed, the truth is that the number was nearer 500. I was exceedingly fortunate with the picture representing the burning of Moscow. Whilst I was engaged upon it an awful fire broke out at Brest-Litopsk. I packed up my canvas and other materials and hurried off to the burning city, of which I obtained a fine view. It was a terrible spectacle—just another such a fire as Moscow must have made—and I had no

difficulty in working the effects into my Moscow picture."

What is the secret of Verestchagin's success as a painter? If one were asked to answer such a question in one short phrase, one could not help saying: "His love of Truth." As the true author holds the mirror up to Nature, so, says Verestchagin, the true artist will paint the real and not the artificial. He has rarely painted anything that he has not seen, and, having seen it, he has painted it exactly as it is. All thoughts of conventionalism are hushed in his studio.

"What will they say if you paint Napoleon like that?"

"I have nothing to do with what they say: I paint Napoleon as he was."

And in that spirit of fidelity to truth Verestchagin has done all his work. He has made himself unpopular; he brought down upon him the whole weight of the Roman Church in Austria; he has offended the military caste: but these things are nothing to him.

"My great desire as an artist and a man is to paint things as they are. As a child, when I saw anything great and noble, I was anxious to give others the same impression of it as it made upon me. And now, as a man, that desire still prevails. If you ask me, as a man, if I like war, I say—No; but, as an artist, I want to give other people the same impression of war as I had when I took part in it. You have seen among my pictures some great mountains in the Caucasus—Kasbeck, for instance. This mountain made a strong impression upon me, and I want my picture to make exactly the same impression upon you."

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"That is the artist's gift?"

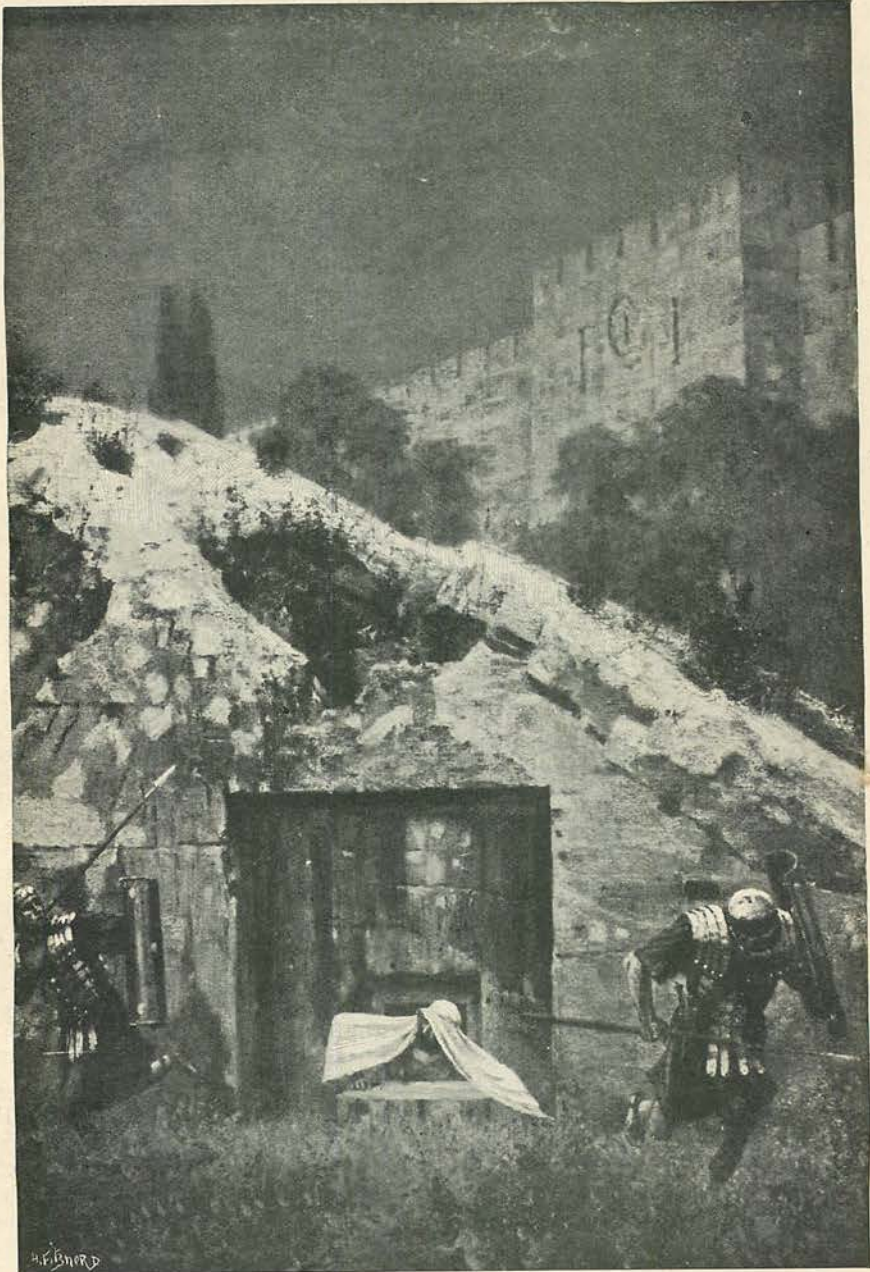
"Exactly. How I make you feel the same impression on looking at the picture as I felt on looking at the mountain, at the war—there is the secret. That is the test of the artist. There was a good French artist, named Neuville, who painted the pictures of one of your Ashantee wars. His pictures are very good, but they do not impress you as the war would have done. They are not real. They have a theatrical veil over them. Why? Because the artist did not see the war. He had not studied the

country. He did not know its people, its landscapes, and the artist must know all these before he can make a realistic picture. Who are the English soldiers in Neuville's pictures? French models in English clothes. Who are the native soldiers? They, too are French negroes, clothed in their native garb. No artist can paint war as it is without going to war itself for his model, and the same rule applies to everything else. In war every army has its own peculiarities. The English move very slowly; the French very quickly. A Frenchman

once arrested in India as an English spy. The natives protested that he was English, and he was brought before the Maharajah. When the council was over the Maharajah declared that the man could not be English because he moved twenty times in his chair while he was being examined, and no Englishman, he said, would do that! The Italian soldier moves like a cat. No Englishman would make such a movement, so that if an Italian painted an English soldier without close study, the result would be very comical. If



From a] VERESTCHAGIN PAINTING A PICTURE OF NAPOLEON. [Photo.



"THE RESURRECTION." (THIS PICTURE WAS AFTERWARDS DESTROYED, OWING TO HOSTILE CRITICISM.)

From the Picture by Verestchagin.

you would paint a real picture, you must see the real thing. Otherwise your picture may be admirable fiction, but it is not truth."

"But an artist must have imagination?"

"Certainly. No artist can do without it. You do not suppose my pictures are exactly as I see them? But I don't allow imagina-

tion to go very far, so that you do not see where it ends, or where it begins."

Nobody can say that in urging the importance of fidelity to the real in art, M. Verestchagin is preaching what he does not practise. He spent a whole year, as already remarked, in reading, before he dipped his brush to

paint Napoleon. "Where did you get that dress?" asked the admiring French artists, and Verestchagin was able to reply, triumphantly, "Out of your libraries." When he wanted to make some sketches in the Himalayas, he climbed the highest mountain but one in the world to study the effects of snow and cloud. They were six when they left the foot of the mountain; when they had climbed 15,000ft. they were only two—Verestchagin and his wife. So frightful was the ascent that even the coolies had left them. When they had reached 15,000ft. they could get no higher. With no other human soul near, and their limbs half frozen, they struggled desperately for life, and then Verestchagin left his wife alone, three miles from the foot of the mountain. He was going for food or help, but neither expected to see the other again. Happily the artist met the coolie who had last left them, returning with food and aid. They were both ill, but as soon as he had recovered Verestchagin took out his colour-box and made some capital sketches of Himalayan effects.

Verestchagin's religious pictures are another illustration of his devotion to truth and his hatred of mere conventionalism. I asked him to tell me the story of his famous picture, "The Resurrection."

"I was compelled to destroy the picture," he said, "owing to its hostile reception in Vienna. I found, when I was in the Holy Land, that the tomb in which the body of Christ was possibly laid was very low—as all tombs are, indeed, in Palestine. It was impossible for our Saviour to have walked out of the tomb upright, and I represented Him stooping, as He must have done. This offended the priests in Vienna, and a great outcry arose against the picture. I was asked to take it down, but refused to do so. The Archbishop of Vienna wrote a hostile letter, and one Sunday a special service was advertised to be held in the cathedral at which I was to be denounced. Thousands assembled, and a special prayer was offered for me, and a special hymn, composed for the occasion, was sung. Pamphlets, condemning the picture, were distributed in the streets in thousands. Had there been any irreverence in the picture, I would have yielded to this demonstration

of public feeling, but there was no suggestion of that. I had visited the Holy Land especially to prepare these religious pictures, and I painted exactly what I found there. I had done the work in a very reverent spirit, and was determined not to sacrifice it to the unreasoning prejudice of the priests. But one day somebody threw vitriol over the picture, and as the damage was irreparable, I destroyed it altogether. Objection was also taken to my picture, 'The Holy Family,' because I painted Jesus Christ amongst His brothers and sisters; but, though an attempt was made to destroy it, the picture was saved by its frame. Many people objected, too, to my picture of John the Baptist as a fakir."

"Have any of your war pictures been objected to?"

"I have been told many times that I ought not to paint the awful side of war so vividly. When I first exhibited my pictures in Russia, people would not believe that they were faithful works of art. They were accustomed to see war pictures of a very



"THANK YOU, ARCHBISHOP."

A cartoon published in Vienna during the excitement caused by Verestchagin's pictures, showing the artist thanking the Archbishop of Vienna for forbidding the people to visit his exhibition.

different kind : a magnificent army in handsome uniform, with banners waving and bands playing as the troops rush down on the enemy, and everything suggestive of victory and peace ; and when, instead, they saw men writhing in agony, torn limb from limb, mangled and bleeding—when they saw headless bodies and arms and legs strewn about the field, and dying men crushed by horses falling over them ; when they saw their heroes bleeding to death and dying of fever and want, they said : ‘This

to come — he gave strict orders in this way. A number of them were to have come together one day, but Moltke ordered them to stay away, and they did so. He was a charming man at home, and he and I were very friendly, but he thought such pictures were not for soldiers to see.

“Some of my Russian pictures have been objected to for very curious reasons. Years ago I painted a Russian regiment in retreat, which roused considerable feeling in Russia, where the military men said that Russian



From the Picture by]

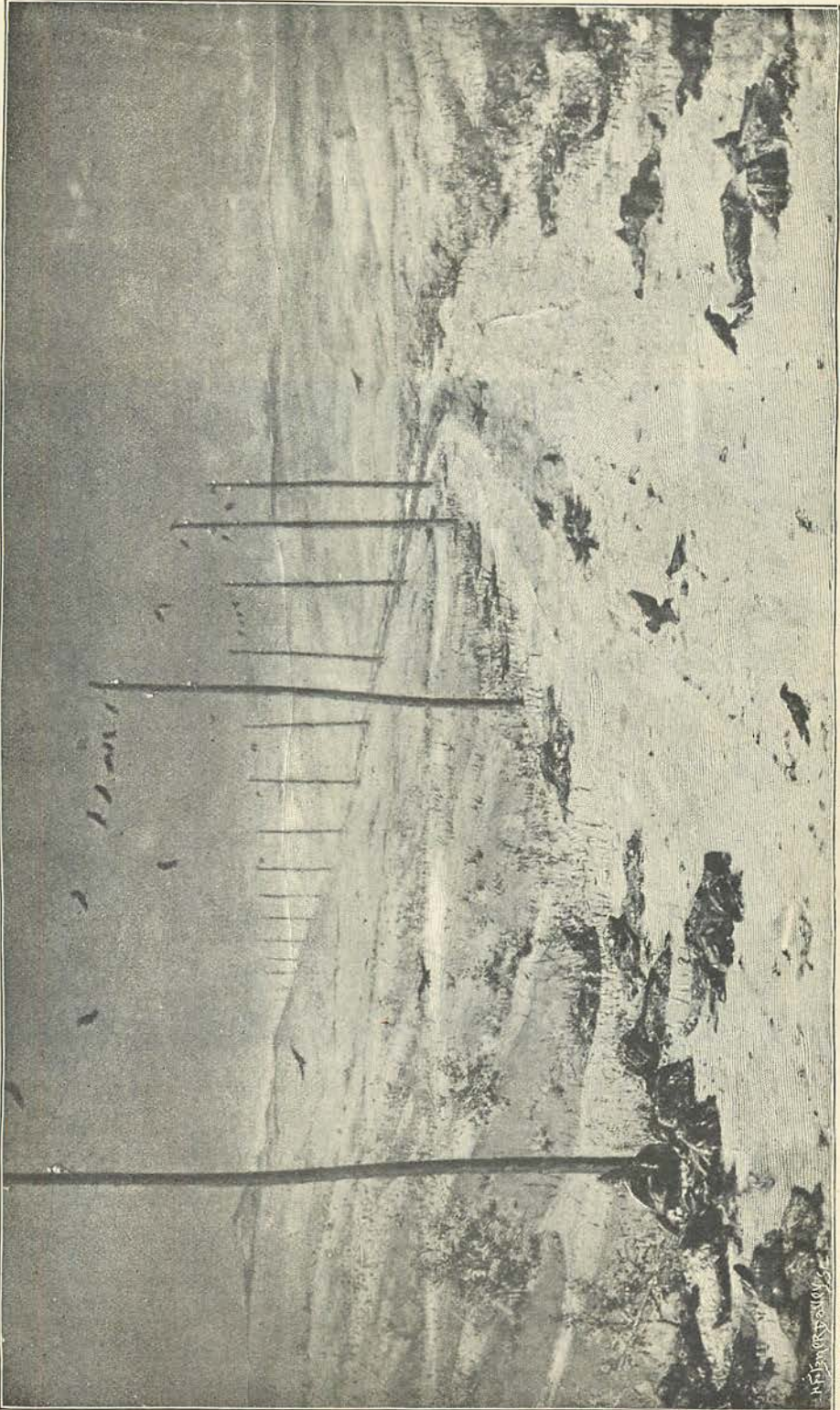
“THE HOLY FAMILY.”

[Verestchagin.

is not true ; this is not war.’ They did not like war in all its naked horror. The late Czar was very angry with me for painting war in such frightful colours. He thought the people ought not to know anything of the worst side of fighting. He was a man of peace, but he was also a soldier, and like all military men he thought that such pictures were not good for the people to see.

“Moltke, whom I knew well, came many times to my exhibitions in Berlin, and was delighted with the pictures. He was the first military man to patronize my exhibition. But he would not allow the soldiers

soldiers should never show their backs ! The feeling was so strong that I burned the painting. That was not the first time, nor the last, that I gave way to public feeling and destroyed an offending picture. There was a picture of a Russian soldier who had been left on the field to die, and the wild birds were hovering over him, while underneath was the one word, ‘Forgotten !’ That created some feeling among the soldiers, though they knew as well as I know that such incidents, horrifying as they seem when painted, are quite common in war. Another picture which I destroyed in disgust through an outburst of unpopular feeling was a



[Perestogin.]

"THE ROAD TO FLEVNA."

From the Picture by

picture of some Russian soldiers smoking their pipes in the midst of their dead comrades. I remember, too, that when I painted Alexander II. sitting on a camp-stool watching the attack on Plevna, many military men were horrified that the Czar might see it. Fancy an Emperor sitting on a stool!"

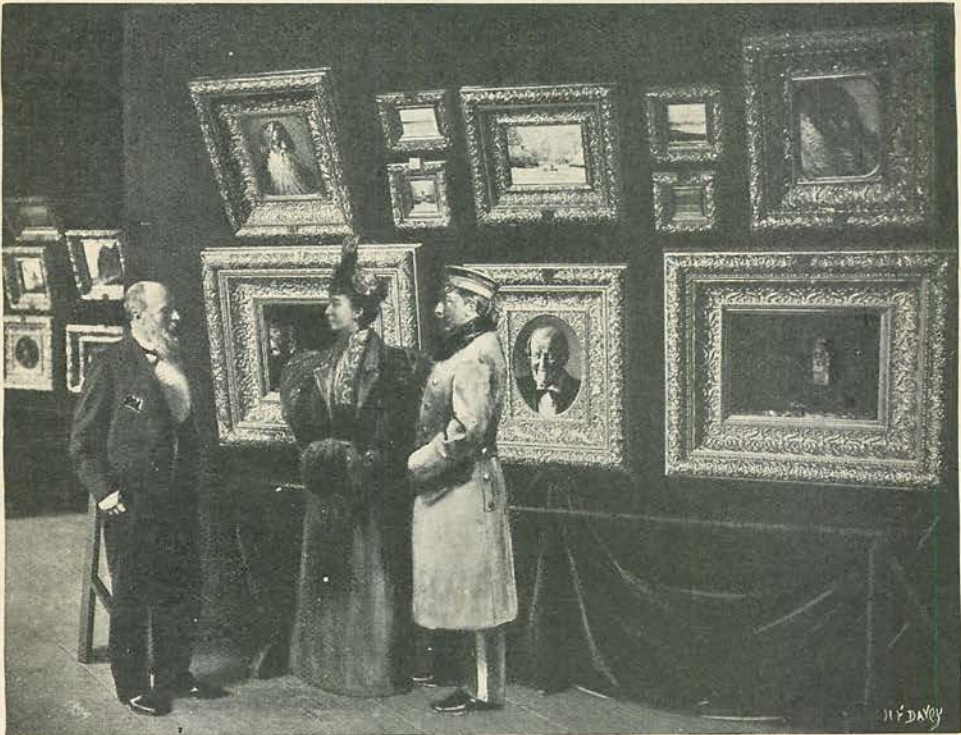
Many of the most famous men of our day have visited M. Verestchagin's exhibitions. When the artist was in Berlin, the Emperor and Empress of Germany went to see the pictures. "What did the Kaiser say?" I asked M. Verestchagin.

"He remained some time, and looked very earnestly at the pictures of Napoleon," said

who want to govern the world; but they will all end like this.' The Emperor assured me that he believed Napoleon wore a huge handkerchief over his head while on the march, and he was so pleased with the pictures that he invited me to the Parade the next day. I asked him if he himself painted, and he said, 'Yes,' and he remarked, too, before going away, that 'Pictures like these are our best guarantees against war.'

"Your pictures appear to inspire everybody with a horror of war. Do you paint them for that purpose?"

"My only purpose in painting a picture is to show you what I saw myself. I try to show



From a]

THE GERMAN EMPEROR AND EMPRESS VISITING M. VERESTCHAGIN IN HIS STUDIO.

I Photo.

the artist. "One of them represents the Retreat. The army is marching along the great high road, anger and dismay on every face. Napoleon goes on in front. His course has been checked: Moscow, on which he had built so many hopes, was burnt to the ground; his army is hungry, cold, and discontented; and there is a look of unfathomable grief on his face. It is a picture of Greatness in Despair. It was on this picture that the Emperor gazed intently for a while, and then, turning away, he said, 'And in spite of that there will still be men

you the truth; what you will see in that truth is your business, not mine. I am not making war against war. I show you war as it is, and leave you to draw your own conclusions. You see what meaning you like in the pictures. I have put no hidden meaning there. It is simply a great fact, from which you make what deduction you please. If you are a military man, you will say, on looking at my pictures, 'Ah! that is charming; what a glorious time they had!' If you are a civilian you will perhaps say, 'How dreadful it is! Why do men kill men like swine?'

But what you say has nothing to do with me. I am satisfied to represent the truth."

"Has the Czar seen your pictures?"

"No. The Emperor of Austria saw them in Vienna. He was much interested in the pictures of Plevna, and after looking at them some time, he said, 'What horrible misery there is in war!' The Prince of Wales has often been to see me. He gave me a sitting in Paris, when I painted His Royal Highness on an elephant on his entry into India. The Prince was just coming from India as I left. He seemed fond of my pictures, and was much struck with two Tibetan dogs I had at the time. He had brought two from India, and he said he thought we were the only men in Europe who possessed such animals. Tourgénéieff, the great Russian novelist, was an old friend of mine, and so was Alexandre Dumas, the younger. Dumas was in my studio once when a lady asked his advice about two famous pictures she had. She could not make up her mind whether to sell them or not, and she consulted Dumas. 'My good lady,' said he, 'while you have these pictures you are an interesting personality; if you sell them you will be nobody. Keep them.'"

M. Verestchagin's home is in Moscow, where he lives with his wife and his three young children. But he does much of his work in Paris, and at one time had a studio in Munich. His home at Maisons-Laffitte, within easy reach from Paris, is a charming place in the clearing of a wood, and his studio there is perhaps the largest studio in the world. It is 100ft. long by 50ft. wide, and the door is 23ft. high, one window being 40ft. by 27ft. When at work here, M. Verestchagin—a tall, well-built man—is a mere speck amidst the great canvases which stand about, and every word spoken echoes back again. The walls

are hung with things which bring back the memory of the artist's travels in India, China, Palestine, and Central Asia, and there is here, too, a wonderful moving studio in which the artist may often be seen working. It is built on the model of a similar studio in which M. Verestchagin worked in Munich in the earlier years of his career, and is 33ft. square.

"If you are to paint open-air scenes, your models must stand in the open," says M. Verestchagin, and to enable this to be done he designed this studio on wheels, running on a circular tramway and opening to the sun on the side nearest the centre of the circle, where the model stands. It



From a]

M. VERESTCHAGIN IN HIS STUDIO AT MOSCOW.

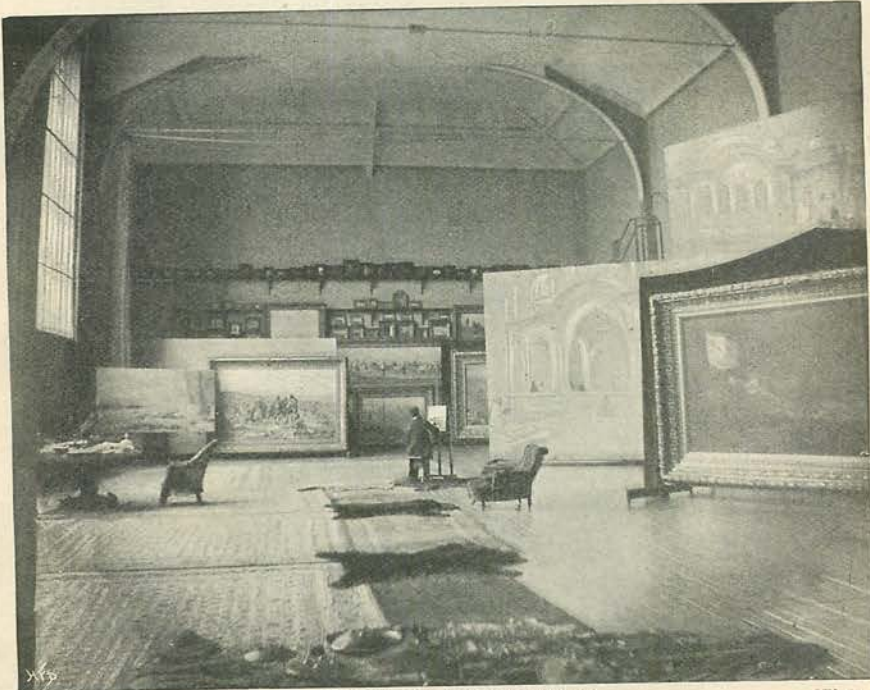
[Photo.

is, in fact, a big box, in which the artist works under cover while the model is in the full glare of day, and which can, by a simple mechanical arrangement, be made to follow the shifting light. Here, and at his studio in Moscow, the whole of M. Verestchagin's pictures have been painted.

"I paint very slowly," he said, when I asked him to give me an idea of his methods of working. "When I was younger I used to rise at six and paint for sixteen hours a day, but I am getting lazy now, and rarely work more than eight. You can put me down as a believer in an eight hours' day. I have always been willing to give up all my time to painting. People sometimes ask me why I paint so

much. Why does a mother love her child? Tell me that, and I will tell you why I paint. Sometimes an idea occurs to me which I persistently resist. I say to myself, 'I won't paint that picture.' But the idea haunts me. I dream about it, and at last I paint the picture because I cannot help painting it. At the end of the day I spend my leisure with my family, my wife being a musician, or go out to a concert. But there are times when I give up these things. Sometimes I cannot get on with my work, and it gives me great pain. When my

popularity in England. His novel based on the Russo-Turkish War—where, by the way, one of his brothers was killed—was published in England many years ago, and he has lately added another to his English works: "1812—Napoleon in Russia," in which all who admire his pictures cannot fail to be greatly interested. The work involved some years of preparation, and just as M. Verestchagin's pictures reveal Napoleon in a new light, his book tells us much about the great Emperor which is new. As a work of history it is of great value, throwing new light on many old



From a

M. VERESTCHAGIN'S STUDIO NEAR PARIS.

[Photo.]

work is not going well, I am not a man. I can neither eat, drink, nor sleep. You might take me and throw me from the window. I am a man again when things go right, as they do after a while; but you mustn't come near me when I am unfortunate!"

But in spite of unfortunate periods and distressing moods, M. Verestchagin has managed to get through an astonishing amount of work during his fifty-six years of life. He has taken part in two wars, has travelled in nearly every land, and has written several books. He is not perhaps widely known as an author, but he has written one or two volumes which have attained some

subjects, and it is also interesting as an evidence of the versatility of Verestchagin's genius. And, besides all this work, he has painted so much that he was once seriously accused of declaring other artists' work to be his own. No single man, it was said in Munich, could paint such a number and such a variety of pictures. But the inquiry committee instituted by the Munich Society of Arts declared the charge to be as unfounded as it was base. The slanderers did not know Verestchagin. They could not know that he would rather daub every picture he has painted than paint a falsehood.